



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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Legislative Republicans join Lunsford on final push for legislation to protect children

LANSING – Legislative Republicans joined Mark Lunsford at a news conference Tuesday to support legislation that would help protect children across Michigan from sexual predators.

Lunsford is the father of Jessica Lunsford, a 9-year-old Florida girl who was kidnapped, raped and murdered by a convicted sex offender. Lunsford was joined by Sens. Tony Stamas, R-Midland; Laura M. Toy, R-Livonia; Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac; Alan Sanborn, R-Richmond Township; and Reps. Phil Pavlov, R-St. Clair Township; and Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township.

"I want Michigan to pass something through because it sends a message to sexual predators 'Don't mess with Michigan,'" Lunsford said. "I want Michigan to be one of the first states to pass tough legislation. How do we justify it to our kids that we let these guys out? We need to show our kids how much power we have and protect them."

Senate lawmakers are working on legislation allowing certain repeat sex offenders who target children to be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

"We need to make sure that sexual predators who prey on children are behind bars where they belong," said Stamas, sponsor of Senate Bill 709. "I'm glad to be working closely with the House to help make sure Michigan children are safe."

SBs 709, 717 and 718 would require repeat offenders convicted of criminal sexual conduct in the first degree to serve a life sentence without a chance of parole if their victims were under the age of 13.

The House of Representatives has been working on Michigan's version of "Jessica's Law" which would provide a minimum of 25 years in prison with lifetime parole for anyone 17 years of age or older convicted of sexually assaulting a child under the age of 13.

"The number of children that are sexual assault victims is growing and we need to put an end to it," said Pavlov, sponsor of House Bills 5421 and 5422. "I commend Mark for taking on this monumental task to tell this painful story all over the United States and change the laws from state to state to safeguard our children."

Law said: "Considering the extensive recidivism rate for child predators, letting these individuals out of prison without extensive monitoring is a chance we should not be taking with our children. When these deranged individuals are eventually released from prison we need the ability track their movements for suspicious behavior and know their exact location in the event of an abduction. The time the police save by monitoring convicted felons could mean the difference between life and death for a young child."

Sponsored by Law, HBs 5531 through 5533 include further monitoring of convicted sexual predators through real-time GPS tracking. The legislation is aimed at those who prey on children under 13.

“Children are our most vulnerable residents,” said Toy, sponsor of SB 717. “We need to do everything we can to help protect them.”

The Senate Committee on Judiciary is expected to approve Michigan’s version of Jessica’s Law at 1 p.m.

The House of Representatives is expected to pass SBs 709, 717 and 718 later today.

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